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# CAROLINA CONNECTIONS

NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTH CAROLINA SEASONAL UPDATE SPRING 2012

## The New *Carolina Connections*, Just One Way to Stay Connected

Welcome to the new look of **Carolina Connections**. The newspaper that readers have enjoyed for close to 20 years has undergone a facelift. *Carolina Connections* has transformed into a seasonal update, published three times a year (Spring, Summer, and Fall/Winter). The goal is to provide visitors with information on attractions and interesting sites that they can visit each season.

Information on camping, hiking, biking and other recreational activities is now included in a companion publication titled **Guide to National Forests in North Carolina**. The recreation guide, which complements *Carolina Connections*, will be updated every few years.

The Forest Service offers electronic copies of *Carolina Connections*. The agency will print a limited number of copies of the recreation guide. Both publications will be available on the National Forests in North Carolina website, [www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc](http://www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc).

Several factors led to the change to *Carolina Connections*. The streamlining of

government operations is one factor. Another is the Forest Service's effort to enhance electronic services. The agency is working to improve its website and other online features so visitors can access information from home or from their laptops, tablets or smart phones.

Visitors to the National Forests in North Carolina can sign up to receive news and alerts by e-mail. Visit [www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc](http://www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc) and click on "Sign up to Receive News by Email."

The National Forests in North Carolina is always looking for ways to improve its informational services. Send suggestions to Stevin Westcott, public affairs officer, at [swestcott@fs.fed.us](mailto:swestcott@fs.fed.us).

**Stay connected with the National Forests in North Carolina, visit:**  
**[www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc](http://www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc)**

## New Faces in the National Forests in North Carolina

There are a number of new Forest Service faces in the Tarheel State.

Keith Lawrence is currently the acting forest supervisor of the National Forests in North Carolina. As temporary forest supervisor, Lawrence oversees management of the

Croatan, Nantahala, Pisgah and Uwharrie National Forests in North Carolina. Keith is forest supervisor at the Savannah River Site. The agency will likely announce a permanent replacement for Marisue Hilliard, who re-

tired as forest supervisor in January, in the coming months. Hilliard served as forest supervisor for the National Forests in North Carolina for six years. She retired from the Forest Service after more than 30 years of service.

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Visit us online at [www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc](http://www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc)

## A Spring Adventure in the Coastal Plain

In the spring, North Carolina's coastal national forest comes alive with natural beauty and offers a wealth of water recreation and outdoor adventure.

One of four national forests in North Carolina, the Croatan National Forest's 160,000 acres include pine forests, saltwater estuaries, bogs and raised swamps called pocosins. Bordered on three sides by tidal rivers and the Bogue Sound, the forest is defined by longleaf and loblolly pine forests, by pocosin swamps and by salt and fresh waters.

This ecosystem provides a diversity of wildlife—from deer, black bears and turkeys to wading birds, red-cockaded woodpeckers and alligators.

### Discover Insect-eating Plants

Along the trails, spring visitors can view an array of unusual plants, such as pitcher plants and Venus flytraps, which catch insects for dinner. Like many other plants in the coastal plains, bogs and pinelands, these insectivorous plants need plenty of sunlight, so foresters conduct prescribed burns to remove excessive vegetation.



*Pitcher plants at the Croatan National Forest*

### Cedar Point: Discover Life Below

In the spring, visitors can travel across boardwalks and explore the salt marsh and the life below and above water. Cedar Point is near White Oak River and offers camping, picnicking, fishing, boating and hiking. Open year round, the campground has 42 sites with electrical hookups, a bathhouse with flush toilets, warm showers, drinking water and a ramp for shallow-water boats. Picnic tables are nearby. The camping fee is \$17 per night with electricity and \$12 without electricity.

### Neusiok Trail: A Hiking Adventure

This 21-mile hiking trail stretches from the Neuse and Newport rivers. Starting at Pinecliff Recreation Area, the trail meanders through a cypress-lined beach, hardwoods, loblolly pines, savannas and thick pocosins. The trail ends at Oyster Point's estuary. Be sure to bring drinking water and wear raincoats and waterproof boots.

### Neuse River Offers Nearby Beach

Visitors will enjoy camping near the Neuse River where an accessible campground offers 42 sites, flush toilets, warm showers, drinking water and a dumping station. Many sites are equipped with electrical hook-ups. A nearby swimming beach borders the Neuse River.

### Fishers Landing: Picnicking and Camping

Open year round, Fishers Landing is located on Neuse River about eight miles south of New Bern. Walk-in picnicking and tent camping are free. Vault toilets and drinking water are available.

### Boating Access

Spring boating opportunities await visitors to the Croatan National Forest. Boat-launching areas include Brices Creek, Catfish Lake, Great Lake, Siddie Fields, Cahoque Creek, Cedar Point, Haywood Landing and Oyster Point. Brices Creek and Haywood Landing fishing piers are fully accessible.

## Cheoah Ranger District

“Spring is a great time to visit the Cheoah Ranger District because there are fewer visitors as compared to the summer months,” said Lauren Stull, district ranger.

The Cheoah offers a number of dispersed campsites for folks who want a more primitive camping experience. If visitors are looking for more amenities, most of Cheoah’s developed campgrounds, including Cheoah Point Campground near Lake Santeetlah, open on April 1. When camping, practice “Leave No Trace” and remember to extinguish any campfires before leaving a site. Help prevent wildfires.

## Nantahala Ranger District

For some folks, spring means fishing for trout in the Nantahala River or in one of the district’s numerous other waterways. Some fishermen stay at the Standing Indian Campground, which boasts 84 sites, or at Van Hook Glade campground with 18 sites.

Spring is a good time to camp in the Nantahala Ranger District as there may be more campsites available compared to the summer months when more campers are in the forest. Horses are welcome at Hurricane Creek Horse Camp or make reservations for a spot at the Wine Spring

Spring is also a good time to hike portions of the Appalachian Trail. More than a dozen miles of the Trail meander through the western part of the Cheoah Ranger District.

While hiking the Trail or other parts of the district this spring, visitors might be lucky enough to see a golden-winged warbler. The Forest Service is partnering with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission to increase habitat for this neotropical songbird whose numbers have declined dramatically over the years.

Fishing on Lake Santeetlah is another popular spring activity. Smallmouth bass, largemouth bass and walleye are among the most common species in this scenic lake.

Horse Camp. In the Blue Valley area, dispersed camping is available on the southern end of the district near the North Carolina-Georgia border. This area offers camping away from some of the busier recreational areas.

For others, spring means nature viewing or looking at the diversity of plants in the Panthertown Valley Backcountry Area. When hiking the trail at Whiteside Mountain, visitors might see peregrine falcons flying above.

Just a reminder, the Forest Service will close Dry Falls Trail from April to September so improvements can be made to the popular site.

## Tusquitee Ranger District

In the spring, the Tusquitee Ranger District is the place to enjoy the beauty of the backcountry.

Dispersed campsites along Hiwassee Lake, Buck Creek and Beech Creek offer visitors a variety of more primitive camping opportunities.

Additional dispersed campsites are available in the Fires Creek Backcountry Area. Also located in the Fires Creek area is the Bristol Horse Camp. Visitors can bring their horses and enjoy an early season jaunt through the forest. The Fires Creek area also offers hiking, picnicking,

and fishing.

Spring is also a good time to hike or bike the Jackrabbit Trails system. There are 14 miles of trails located a half-mile from the Jackrabbit campsites. Anglers can head to Chatuge Lake and fish for a number of species.

Hunters can hone their skills at the Panther Top shooting range. The facility is open year-round. The 100-yard range accommodates pistols and rifles. The cost to use the facility is \$2 a day or \$25 for a season pass.

NANTAHALA NATIONAL FOREST

## Appalachian Ranger District

For Appalachian District Ranger Tina Tilley, spring means fishing, flowers and fun. For example, a new handicapped-accessible fishing pier along the South Toe River gives visitors the chance to catch a tasty fish. The pier is located near the Black Mountain Campground in case you want to drown a worm or two.

Wildflowers, such as bluets and lillies, adorn Roan Mountain this time of year. In the area of Big Ivy, trilliums and violets will be blooming.

In March and April, some visitors enjoy harvesting the mountain delicacy called ramps. The National Forests in North Carolina provides a fact sheet about ramps

online. Individuals can harvest up to five pounds of ramps at no cost with a “free-use” permit. Permits can be obtained at the ranger station. The National Forests in North Carolina fact sheet on ramps is at: [http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5188149.pdf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5188149.pdf).

Lastly, encounters with black bears can occur at campsites or other areas. Be “Bear Aware” by not keeping food or other scented items, such as soap, in your tent. Store food in a tree or in the trunk of the car. Remove food remnants from the campsite and dispose of trash in bear-proof receptacles.

## Grandfather Ranger District

Spring camping opportunities abound in the Grandfather Ranger District. The Curtis Creek Campground, just north of Old Fort, offers close to 30 sites and a variety of services. Trout fishing in the creek is a favorite pastime for many visitors. Fishing licenses are needed.

Trout season attracts many anglers to Wilson Creek as well. Fishermen and women often stay at Mortimer Campground, which features 19 sites and handicap-accessible restrooms.

For off-road vehicle (OHV) enthusiasts, April brings the opening of Brown Mountain OHV Area. Users will need to purchase a pass from the district office or a vendor site before using the trail. Contact the district office for vendor locations.

Spring is also a great time to hike in the Grandfather Ranger District. Unfortunately, a casual hike can turn into a search-and-rescue when visitors are unprepared. Remember to leave a trip plan with a relative or neighbor. Carry a map, compass and charged cell phone. If lost, don’t walk aimlessly. Stay on a trail if you are on one.

## Pisgah Ranger District

The Cradle of Forestry is a must-see when visiting the Pisgah Ranger District in the spring. The Cradle opens April 14. Located off US 276, it spans a century of forest conservation history and offers a glimpse of life at America’s first school of forestry along the Biltmore Campus Trail. Relax and walk along the 1.3-mile Forest Festival Trail. Learn more about forestry in America by visiting the Forest Discovery Center. The Cradle of Forestry offers a number of events in the spring that the whole family will enjoy. For more information, visit: [www.cradleofforestry.com](http://www.cradleofforestry.com).

When leaving the Cradle, take a right on US 276 and drive to the Pink Beds picnic area to see an array of blooming spring wildflowers and rhododendrons. Visitors can see an abundance of wildlife and enjoy a sandwich or picnic lunch. The five-mile long Pink Beds Loop has only minor elevation changes, so it is popular for family hikes.

The Sunburst Campground, in the western part of the district, offers visitors the wonders of the Shining Rock Wilderness and Middle Prong Wilderness areas. Sunburst Campground provides a day-use area for picnics as well as fishing, hiking and more.



## Spring in the Piedmont

The 50,000-plus-acre Uwharrie National Forest is invigorated in the spring. The forest experiences a rebirth when temperatures climb, dogwoods and other plants start to bloom and animals emerge from winter slumber. While the Uwharrie National Forest is small compared to most other national forests, it will be a very busy place for three seasons as visitors flock to enjoy the forest's splendor and access to numerous outdoor adventures.

### Hunting and Fishing

For some, spring fishing in Badin Lake is one of the best ways to enjoy the Uwharrie National Forest's scenic beauty. Four fishing piers and a boat ramp give anglers easy access to fish such as bass and crappie. A fishing license is needed.

Turkey hunting is enjoyed by many outdoorsmen and women in the spring. The season runs April 14-May 12 for male or bearded turkeys. Hunters should have a valid hunting license. Hunters and anglers must follow all other regulations set forth by the State of North Carolina when hunting or fishing in the Uwharrie National Forest. All visitors should wear blaze orange during hunting season.

### Horseback Riding

In the spring, equestrians enjoy the 40 miles of marked horse trails in the Badin Lake trail system. Visitors can park for day rides in Badin Horse Camp off Mullinix Road or in Overflow Camp on McLean's Creek Road. The nearby Canebrake Horse Camp offers a variety of amenities such as riding from the campsite to the trails. Plan early and reserve a campsite in advance at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov).

Equestrians are required to stay on the trails when riding at the Uwharrie National Forest. Riding off trail can

adversely effect forest health. Here are some helpful hints:

- Stay on the trail and ride in single file to avoid widening the trail.
- Water stock at natural fords or from a bucket.
- Pack some grain, since grazing is limited. Use weed-free hay when possible to prevent the spread of noxious plants.
- Avoid tying horses to trees. Use a high-line with tree-saver straps to tether animals. This prevents horses from trampling tree roots and chewing bark.
- Scatter manure piles and fill areas dug up by horse hooves when breaking camp.

### Off-highway Vehicles (OHV)

The Badin Lake OHV trails provide 17 miles of trails for all-terrain vehicles, trail bikes and four-wheel drive vehicles. The trails are open April 1-December 15. A daily permit fee is \$5 and a season permit is \$30 per operator. Permits are available from local vendors near the recreation area or from the Uwharrie Ranger District office in Troy. Operators must follow National Forest rules when riding on the OHV trails. For a complete list, visit [www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc](http://www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc) and look under "Recreation," then "OHV Trail Riding."

### Mountain Biking

Mountain bikers can enjoy some new trails on the forest this spring. The Wood Run trail system offers approximately 22 miles of trails and forest roads through the Uwharrie National Forest. The trails are located just off NC 24/27 between Albemarle and Troy.

# UWHARRIE NATIONAL FOREST

## NATIONAL FORESTS in NORTH CAROLINA

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## New Faces in the National Forests in North Carolina

(cont'd from page 1)

Diane Rubiaco is the new deputy forest supervisor for the National Forests in North Carolina. In the position, she assists in overseeing management of the four national forests in the state, encompassing 1.25 million acres. Most recently, Rubiaco served four years as district ranger in the Eldorado National Forest in her home state of California.

The Croatan National Forest has a new ranger. His name is John "Pancho" Smith. Pancho has enjoyed a long career with the Forest Service, primarily in the field of law enforcement. Since 2008, Smith has served as a regional patrol commander in the Southwestern Region of the Forest Service.

Derek Ibarguen is the new ranger in the Pisgah Ranger District, Pisgah National Forest. Since February 2009, Ibarguen has served as London District ranger in the Daniel Boone National Forest in Kentucky. From 2007 to 2009,

he worked in a district recreation, facilities and special uses staff position in the Umpqua National Forest in Oregon.

Lauren Stull is the new ranger in the Cheoah/Tusquitee Ranger Districts. From 2009-2011, she served as the deputy district ranger for the two districts. From 2007-2009, Stull held a Presidential Management Fellow position with the National Forests in Florida.



*Lauren Stull, new ranger on the  
Cheoah/Tusquitee Districts*



*Diane Rubiaco is the new deputy forest supervisor for the  
National Forests in North Carolina*

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